

# My Occult Experiences

by Johan van Manen, F. T. S.

(with Explanatory Notes by CW Leadbeater, F. T. S.)

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## Introduction

There exists an old letter of H. P. B.'s, copies of which are now exceedingly rare, addressed some thirty years ago to the members of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society. It is a confidential admonition to the Lodge concerning spiritual endeavour, and contains a paragraph which struck me very forcibly when I read it. This passage says that if members only gave proper attention to the little experiences of life they might find revealed in them unsuspected occult teachings or unthought-of instances of occult influence. In the light of this injunction I have kept a close watch on such tiny rays of light as have filtered through, from time to time, into my own every-day consciousness, and have analysed carefully the slight glimpses into the something-else which now and then have been vouchsafed to me.

I am not a clairvoyant, and I wish at the outset to prevent any possible misconstruction of what I am going to lay before my readers. I am not able to turn on the tap of astral or any other sight as one might switch on or off the electric light. That is only for the masters in the art. It is of the utmost importance for the sane and solid development of the Theosophical movement that the strictest probity should prevail in all reports and relations of psychic experiences, and that no one should suffer to cluster round himself exaggerated opinions concerning his occult powers. Such incorrect estimation, if spread widely within our ranks, would ultimately annihilate all sound standards of judgment, falsify doctrine and turn into chaos what should be an ordered whole of testimony and description. The temptation to promote, or at least not to prevent, such a state of things is very great in our Society, and there are minor deities in our ranks who have sinned heavily in this respect.

What I have to present then is a sober record of whatever experiences I recollect as I write, in so far as they seem to have an illustrative value, especially selecting those examples which seem to be capable of some interpretation. I divide them into groups as their nature suggests.

It seems to me that such an autobiographical fragment may be of some value as furnishing material for comparison. It may also incite others to relate their similar experiences. In the hands of some other "James" these "varieties of religious experience" may then be ultimately welded into an instructive whole. It should, however, be well understood that any such relation can have value only if the experience has been very carefully observed and, so far as possible, analysed, keen introspection having taken place at the time. The experience may have been religious, but the description must be scientific; the value may have been mystical, but the process must be recognised as psychological. Above all, the giving of premature (Theosophical or other) explanations to such experiences must be avoided. That is a matter for the experts, psychologists or occultists. We are only concerned with one end of the line, that of truthfully reporting. The explainers stand at the other end. So, for instance, no special 'plane' should be assigned to any phenomenon or sensation. Only an occultist can do that. A subjective feeling of the highest rapture may well have been produced by a dulling of the general sensibility, and that only: the felicity of *tamas* is something else than that of *sattva*.

Many readers may recognise in the few experiences I have to relate some of their own, or at least find an affinity with them. Perhaps they may have thought that such experiences were too isolated, infrequent and unimportant to note down. Here, however, the value of H.P.B.'s remark shows itself. I too attach very little value or importance to most of the experiences which I relate, and none at all to some of them, but I see equally well that, taken together - despite their infrequency - they indicate that my mind comes now and then into touch with a mysterious other-world of consciousness, where, it seems, forms of thought prevail other than those which we know here. They tell me that if I could always have present the symbolic vision and synthetic thought or the heightened sensibility of which I have only experienced momentary and intermittent flashes, I should be so much the richer as a conscious being and, I think, a step higher in the scale as an evolving entity. The mere experience, once, leads me to believe that there may be a possibility of experiencing it always and uninterruptedly. In short, I regard these things as forebodings, foreshadowings, promises even, for distant days to come, and as my own *personal* and

invaluable little certitudes for that hope of inner unfoldment which, roughly, is sketched out by modern Theosophical literature, but which, after all, is and must remain unprovable by books alone. In other words: our occultists testify to their higher experiences. From their vast masses of testimony I think I have perceived the existence of a few atoms; and the existence of one atom of gold is enough to prove that gold exists.

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## I. CHILDHOOD

From the days of my childhood I recollect only two experiences. The first is trifling but amusing, and became intelligible to me only afterwards.

**I.1. Astral Nakedness.** I was asleep, and was walking in one of the streets of the little town in which I was then living. I was amusing myself as children do at that age, but suddenly I became aware that I was clad only in my nightshirt (pyjamas being a fairly recent invention as far as Holland is concerned). I experienced a feeling of intense shame and felt as if all passers-by in the street were looking at me. I awoke with a start and felt still very much ashamed. Later on in reading about the astral plane I found the clue to this dream which, by its extraordinary vividness, made a strong impression on me.

[Notes by CWL]. (I very heartily congratulate my friend, Mr. Van Manen; first on his courage in coming forward thus openly to relate experiences many of which are of a somewhat private character; secondly, on the clearness and force with which he has stated them; and thirdly and chiefly, on the experiences themselves.

For, though to those unversed in these studies they may at first glance appear disconnected, anyone who has fully opened the higher consciousness will at once recognise them all as parts of a coherent whole. True, many of them are glimpses only, but they are glimpses of the higher world, giving to him who experiences them a momentary foretaste of what will in the future be the everyday possibilities of his life.

Again and again our author explains that he cannot do justice to his subject - that words fail to express what he has seen and felt. We have all felt that, and we can well appreciate his difficulty; but, nevertheless, even though the attempt at description fails, as it cannot but fail, there are still touches in it which are unmistakable to those who have seen. He is assuredly quite right in regarding these experiences as foreshadowings of days still to come; and it is easy to appreciate his remark that even the simplest direct experience gives one a certainty as to the existence of other worlds which is not to be gained by any amount of mere study.

He hardly does himself and his experiences justice when he says that "a subjective feeling of the highest rapture may have been produced by a dulling of general sensibility." The dulling of sensibility *does* give a blissful feeling of complete repose, of escape from the ever-present weight and weariness of physical life which we ordinarily fail to recognise, because we have been born into it, and know no other condition; but the essence of this feeling is *relief*, which is a kind of negative sensation. The bliss of the higher worlds has in it an intensity of positive vivid life - life in the most vigorous activity, life raised to the *n*th power - which is quite unmistakable, and by no means to be confused with the other. At least, so it seems to me.

The first experience which he notes for us is by no means uncommon - that of finding oneself in some public place with much less than the usual amount of clothing. It has often been said in Theosophical literature that in the astral and higher worlds people clothe themselves as they choose by a mere effort of the will. Very often this will seems to act unconsciously, so that most people appear in some quite ordinary costume with which their friends are familiar; but where through forgetfulness or for some other reason the active will fails to attend to this matter, the subconscious part of it gives us an automatic reproduction of the garment which is actually worn by the physical body at the moment, as in the case which our author describes.)

**I.2. The Wrong End of the Telescope.** The second experience is one which I can only describe, not understanding it at all up to this day. Fairly often when lying in bed prior to falling asleep it seemed as if the walls of the room and perhaps also the objects therein were beginning to recede and recede unendingly, and they would appear as if seen through the wrong end of a

telescope. This recession, however, was not so much in a straight line as rather in a most curious twirling motion, as if every point in them was turning itself inside out. To put it graphically, it was as if every point, as well as the whole total, was moving away in the manner of a ring of smoke, blown by an expert in these matters. I believe that I at least once saw small heinzel-männchen-like figures in the distance. Of course I did not analyse these things at the time in such detail, but I remember the experience clearly. As a matter of fact I was rather afraid of this sort of thing.

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**I.3. Turned Inside Out.** I may add that in later times I have had on several occasions a sensation analogous to the above, only it was not accompanied by visual impressions. Several times I have experienced in concentration the *feeling* (in the body) of such a turn-inside-out movement, going on like a propeller in the air. I always expected that the next turn should lead somewhere (where exactly I could never locate), but it always ended in nothing. Sometimes this sensation is not felt inside the body but in the space around the body, and then the impression is that one ascends, or as the case may be descends, ever and ever more highly or deeply. Yet one never arrives, though firmly expecting to arrive somewhere.

[CWL note] (The second and third experiences are very characteristic and instantly recognisable, yet impossible fully to describe or to make clear to those who have never felt anything of the kind. The change from the physical to the astral consciousness usually takes place so quickly that it has no observable stages; and even when the stages are observed, some people naturally select one group of phenomena for special attention, while others concentrate themselves on a quite different group. When one does reach the astral plane, its consciousness is by no means equally developed in all of us. Some of us, for example, invariably associate with it the power to see fourth-dimensionally, while most have as yet no glimpse of that quality. This peculiar spiral turning inside-out which is mentioned here clearly indicates the possession of knowledge of that sort, and the quaint way in which, when the author is just about to pass into that condition of consciousness, he experiences the change some times in himself, sometimes outside himself, and sometimes in connection with partially seen physical objects - all these again are thoroughly characteristic of that condition of half-awakened consciousness. When this is attained in meditation it ought of course to lead to something, as Mr. Van Manen very properly says; but all who have experimented in these matters know well how frequently one fails upon the very brink of success, and how many times one has to try before results are finally achieved.)

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## II. PROPHETIC VISIONS AND DREAMS

After these two preliminary incidents I will deal with those of later years, now roughly classifying the examples. The two following experiences are of necessity of an intimate nature, and I have to apologise for mentioning them, in order not to be accused of vanity. They are, however, the only two of the class I have, and so I cannot leave them out without making my record, so far as it goes, incomplete. I need not say that I myself have not consciously invented their interpretation; the interpretation came simultaneously with the pictures as part and parcel of them. I have nothing to do with it. Besides, it may be false, and also the first part in each story is not flattering to me, nothing to boast of.

**II.4. An Inverted Icarus.** As far as I recollect, soon after my entrance into the Theosophical Society I would see, or a picture of it would arise in my consciousness, a little figure, standing as if on a strip of seashore. I remember quite well one morning, while dressing, how I stared a long time at that little figure, naked, on the beach, before me. I saw with the 'mind's eye,' whatever that may mean. There was no objective picture, no beach anywhere near, yet I saw the picture. That little shining figure was somehow about an inch or two high, though how I could assign length I don't know, unless I stared through the window-sill, which may have furnished a sort of general background of measure. Anyhow the little figure was *me*, not in the sense of a pre-incarnational me, but he *signified* me, he was meant to *indicate* me. While I watched I saw that the little figure was meant to do something, but was tarrying and tarrying. Strange - the figure was there and did nothing, but I knew that he was doing something very hard: he was *waiting*, losing time. I saw what he was doing: he was doing *nothing*, he was *positively at work* at doing nothing. At last, very much at last, the figure made up his mind and with one mighty jump soared upwards into the sky like a rocket, leaving a silvery track, and, reaching the sky with a graceful curve, disappeared.

This picture I saw several times during my younger days of membership. The explanation, neither sought for nor discussed, came simultaneously with, and as involuntarily as, the picture. It was that I should squander much time (and evidently many opportunities) in the first period (which may of course stretch over many lives, who knows?) of my endeavours to reach or tread the Path, but that once having reached it I should make rapid and brilliant progress.

Once more I only record my experience, and if I have constructed picture or explanation by the aid of my subconsciousness, then call my sub-ego vain but not me, for I myself do not accept responsibility for either.

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**II.5. A Troubled Dinner.** The second case of prophetic character was a dream, and dates from a few years later than the previous story. I was living at the time in the Theosophical Headquarters in Amsterdam, and one night I dreamt very vividly that I was sitting at table with all, or most, of my fellow-inhabitants of Headquarters. I do not know whether Mrs. Besant and some other Theosophical leaders were present at the meal; I'm uncertain concerning that detail. We were eating the specially Dutch dish 'hutspot' (a kind of hodge-podge, mainly consisting of mashed potatoes and slices of carrot). I remarked that my neighbour and good friend, Mr. Wierts van Coehoorn, was eating away with fierce determination. When I made ready to fall to also, a regular flow of earwigs began to issue from the food on my plate. I began to kill them as they came along, and kept at it a long time. I felt that if I gave up the food as a bad job, I should fail in something very important. At last the stream of insects ceased; the last had been killed, and I ate the food, finishing it. Awakening in the morning I remembered simultaneously dream and explanation. The latter was similar to that of the previous experience. There were in my character as yet many flaws; I was united to a group of other people all striving for the higher life (eating the food spiritual). For me the task was very difficult. I had to slay several obnoxious skandhas, to work off several items of bad karma. But I must not leave off, must not turn away discouraged. After having overcome these difficulties I too would finish my plate, *i.e.*, attain.

True prophecy or not, I have a shrewd suspicion that I recognised some of the earwigs; some of them are not yet dead at the present day! I wonder whether if I had dreamed this dream in India instead of Holland, the earwigs would not have been cockroaches or ants?

[CWL note] (Experiences four and five are obviously instances of the symbolical thought of the ego, which he is kind enough to throw down in this case into the lower mind along with a strong impression of its explanation. Our writer is fortunate in this, for it is far more common to receive the symbol without the explanation, and to be left to guess wildly. The first symbol is beautiful, the second distinctly unattractive; but no doubt the ego, which does not eat, would find it difficult to comprehend the idea that unpleasant forms of life would pollute food. Very characteristic also is the fact that, in the case of the little figure standing on the beach, the seer knows that he is wasting time in unnecessary hesitation, although he is in no way told that fact, nor is there anything in the vision itself to show it. I do not mean that the ego thinks in pictures such as these; but pictures such as these are the nearest representation that we can get down here of the way in which an ego formulates thought. But his thought means and includes much more than can be represented in our picture.)

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### III. MEDITATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Of these I will relate two. The first I have already published in this journal some years ago, but it may be repeated here as having a natural place in this report.

**III.6. A Vision of Brotherhood.** Some years ago in meditation I tried several experiments with myself, and some of these led to results which I found rather interesting. When meditating on a single idea, such as purity, love, or unity, there would often come to me a sudden and vivid vision symbolising that idea, accompanied by a spontaneously-arising sonnet, the contents of which were always a poetic commentary on the vision.

For example, one day when meditating on brotherhood there suddenly leaped into existence before my internal vision a magnificent temple, apparently Egyptian or Grecian in style. It had no outer walls, but consisted of a large number of pillars, supporting a graceful roof, and surrounding a small walled shrine, into which I did not see. I cannot express the vividness with

which I felt that the building was instinct with meaning - impregnated, as it were, with a magnetism of intelligence which made it no mere vision, but an object lesson containing the very highest teaching. Simultaneously the explanatory sonnet unfolded itself, and described in its few terse compact lines how this was a symbol of true brotherhood - how all these pillars, all in different places, some bathed in the glorious sunlight, some forever in the half shade of the inner lines, some thick, some thin, some exquisitely decorated, some equally strong yet unadorned, some always frequented by devotees who used to sit near them, others always deserted - how all of them silently, ungrudgingly, perseveringly and equally bore together the one roof, protecting the inner hall and its shrine - all different and yet so truly all the same. And the sonnet ended: "In this see brotherhood."

I could not reproduce it now, but the richness and fulness of its meaning, the deep wisdom so neatly wrapped up in those few words, made me see as if in the gleam of a search-light what true brotherhood really means - the sharing of service, the bearing one's part, regardless of all else but the work to be done.

A word of caution should be added. Cases are on record where glorious poems have been composed in states of meditation or rapture, but when written down these proved sometimes to be nothing more than insufferable doggerel. I never put my experiences along such lines to the test by writing them down.

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**III.7. The Master's Love for Humanity.** At another time, whilst sitting in meditation, there appeared before me a figure of Master K. H., bearing a child on His arm. The appearance was like the image of a Roman Catholic saint, something similar to the figure of the Virgin with the Christ-child. Its height was about two or three feet - though I cannot find any reason why I should fix any definite measurement to the appearance, there being no point of comparison. Nevertheless the impression of size was there. My eyes were closed and the figure drifted into (internal) vision and out of it, not fading away, as far as I can remember. The curious thing was that I was at the time not at all thinking of the Master, and the appearance was, as it were, an intrusion from without into the current of my consciousness.

Now the chief importance of the phenomenon was that I *knew* that the child was humanity, and that I *felt* the immense and indescribable love of the Master for it. It was this love that was the central point in the experience. I have never before or since felt anything like it. It was overwhelming in its strength and virility, and at the same time in its softness and tenderness. It was mighty and holy and overflowing full of life and reality and force. It was something beyond merely human capacity; mighty without violence, sweet without weakness; unique, and yet so natural. Of course I cannot describe it, of course I cannot remember - or better, recall it. I remember *that* it was, but not *how* it was, as, in after years, one remembers *that* some excruciating pain was once suffered, but the pain itself does not emerge again from the past. All I know now is that, since that time, I can laugh at any ordinary talk about love, even the highest and holiest descriptions. All love that I have heard about, or read about, or have seen manifested, or have been able to feel myself, is as a pale shadow of that great Love radiating from that picture, is in comparison to it a stone for bread, an empty husk for the fruit of life, is a dream, a delusion, a snare - is nothing.

When I speak here again of 'seeing,' it should be understood that in this as in other cases I do so only for want of other words. I had a visual impression, that is all. Of its nature I am wholly ignorant.

[CWL note] (The vision of brotherhood, and that other which indicates the Master's love for humanity, are deeper and more beautiful examples of the same faculty. The wonderful vision of the temple is a very fine example of thought in the causal body, and our author describes for us also how there comes along with it a poetical expression of its meaning - a sonnet which, however, he is unable to recover upon the physical plane. The thought of the ego is perfect; it is in itself at the same time a picture and a description, but in order to give upon the physical plane even the most imperfect expression of its wondrous fullness, it is necessary to call upon two of our modes of manifestation - painting and poetry. But for the ego the picture and the poetic description are one effort, and that no more of an effort than the flash of an ordinary thought into the brain is for us. The word of caution with which our author annotates this experiences - saying that what in a condition of rapture appear to be glorious poems often prove to be dreadful doggerel when written down - is not, strictly speaking, appropriate in this case, though true with regard to another and quite different type of experience - the partial recollection on waking of the memories of the physical brain, whose rather dull consciousness is apt to regard its geese as especially noble swans, and is quite capable of



endowing doggerel with indescribable splendour. But this is a case of the consciousness of the ego, and consequently the poem, on its own plane, must have been perfect - indeed, what would seem to us super-perfect; though it is true that it is utterly impossible to bring such a thing down into ordinary human words, and that attempts to do so have frequently ended in bathos. But he need have no doubt that at its own level the poetical expression was as perfect as the picture, though less susceptible of translation. Such a thought as that, including all those varied meanings, and manifesting in many different ways, *is* the thought "brotherhood" to an ego.

In the second of these two experiences we have again the characteristic knowledge of the exact meaning of what was seen, without the reception of definite information; and again in the deep realisation of the intensity of the Master's love, so far beyond anything which language can express. Every word of the description at once evokes a mental response in those who have felt, but cannot describe. The figure *may* have been a thought-form called into existence by some other ego, but if that were so, the writer instantly accepted it, understood it and responded to it, and through it attained a realisation which can never be reached on the physical plane.)

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## IV. PSYCHOLOGY

The next two experiences seem best classified as more directly psychological. The first appears very trivial, but as I have found that others also have observed a similar thing I record it.

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**IV.8. A Living Portrait.** During the first year of my membership in the Society I habitually put a portrait of H. P. B. on the table at which I worked. (The maidservant was afraid of that queer face; she thought it uncanny, and called it - out of *my* hearing - the spook.) Now, often looking up to the portrait, it seemed many a time to express a variety of moods in response to mine. I got the impression that it could clearly express approbation and discontentment, approval and reproach. Of course I do not refer to actual physical changes in the piece of cardboard, but its psychical impression changed according to circumstances; I felt the facial expression differently.

For many years I have no longer observed similar impressions, and I recognise that I have perhaps lost a certain guilelessness which may probably be a prerequisite for receptivity in this direction.

To the second experience I attach more value; indeed, it afforded me some instruction and furnished me with some food for serious thought.

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**IV.9. A Spiritual Duel.** In the Amsterdam Headquarters, where I resided at the time, the chief leader was Mrs. Meuleman, a striking and forceful character, of whom I still think with great gratitude and respect, and to whom I owe much in the way of help and guidance during a stage of my journey through life. She was a remarkable personality and, so far as I can gather, was of the H. P. B. type, though not, perhaps, of the same stature. She had all the ruggedness and incalculability of that type, as well as its constant self-contradictions; at the same time she was whole-heartedly devoted to the Theosophical cause, and was a true, loyal and tender friend. To me she has always been a living commentary on H. P. B. herself, and by living in close intimacy with her I have learned to understand much in Theosophical history which otherwise would have remained puzzling and unintelligible to me.

Temperamentally Mrs. Meuleman and myself were very different, and though I recognised her very many superior qualities, her manner and method were often unacceptable to me. In short, I felt often towards her a sort of inner rebellion wedded to outer assent - not so much a state of hypocrisy as a war of conflicting elements in my nature. Now the curious point about it was that this feeling chiefly manifested only in meditation and in dreams, and little in the ordinary waking consciousness. Without intentionally seeking it, I would in meditation drift into veritable battles, true duels, of arguments and controversy with Mrs. Meuleman, or wake up from sleep with the memory of a vivid dream to the same effect. There was no question of insults or of unseemly fighting, but rather I felt as if my real self was 'having it out' with the real self of my antagonist. I had a sort of

impression not as if the personalities were in conflict, but as if the egos were engaged, so that my own personality-consciousness was not only looking on, but also half identifying itself with something behind itself that fought the battle. As said before, I never consciously started this train of thought, it was rather as if some restrained and subdued subconscious impulse worked itself out on these occasions. (Mrs. Meuleman being an old lady and I a youngster, she holding the local headship of the E. S. whilst I was a novice, and all other points being similarly disproportionate, there could not be any frank discussion on the footing of equality. Some things must therefore needs remain unsolved.) I related the case to Mrs. Meuleman, and she gave a fine intuitive answer for which I am still grateful to her - which symbolised one of these large traits in her character - showing tolerance and insight - which made us all love her so much. She simply said: "That is a very good sign, my boy. Go on fighting until you have fought it out." And she spoke no more of it. Indeed, it has been a source of the greatest satisfaction to me to have been able to come to a definite conclusion, and be consequently at rest, with regard to Mrs. Meuleman's remarkable character a short time before her death. She was in many ways a great woman, who nobly and strongly held a responsible post during the period when there was no other to hold it.

[CWL note] (The eighth item on our list sounds fantastic, yet is not so in reality. It must be remembered that every portrait is a definite link with its subject, and I have little doubt that that would be so to a far greater extent than is usual in the case of such a teacher as Madame Blavatsky. It is not probable that any change (other than a very slow and gradual one) took place in the physical expression of the face upon the cardboard; but it is certain that the author's frequent thought of Madame Blavatsky would attract her attention, and it is likely that in answer to it she would project enough of herself into that portrait to convey to him such impressions as he describes. These impressions would be by no means necessarily reflections of the moods of the owner of the portrait; they are far more likely to have been the comments of the original of the portrait upon those moods, or upon the actions which had led to them or resulted from them. A portrait is a very real centre of force, and when the person whom it represents has any degree of occult advancement it is often an actual means of communication to a quite considerable extent.

Many of our students know that it is possible gradually to modify the expression of a portrait by long meditation upon it; but that is a phenomenon of a class different from that which is mentioned above. The fact that similar impressions are no longer received may possibly be due to the reason given in the text but it is just as likely to mean that Madame Blavatsky herself considers that her pupil has reached a stage where such special attentions are no longer necessary.

The spiritual duel described in number nine is remarkable and interesting. It is clearly a case of an argument between two egos working on different lines. The physical plane personalities attached to the two egos were brought into a somewhat difficult relationship - one in which our author was expected to adopt the attitude of a submissive disciple. One can see that there were many ways in which this was good and necessary at a certain stage in evolution; but it was inevitable that difficulties should arise, owing to the fact that the dispositions and the lines of evolution of the two egos were so entirely different. If the people concerned had been less forbearing, these innate differences between those who were forced together into such a close relationship would have led to violent quarrels; I think both parties may be congratulated on the good sense with which they faced a delicate situation.)

## V. SEEING IDEAS

Here we enter upon another group of phenomena. They seem, for one thing, to be marked off by the peculiarity that I experienced them only in normal waking consciousness. I find that I have the faculty of occasionally seeing an idea, a conception, in visual form. The vision comes suddenly and unexpectedly. About the nature of this seeing I might expatiate more fully, but the task is too subtle for me. Enough to say that I have not only the impression that I have *seen*, but also the impression that I have not seen *details*. I might put it that I feel as if I had seen the universals of the vision, but not its particulars. As however universals are not objectively existent in the outer world, I do not know what is the 'form' of what I have seen. Yet I have clearly the recollection of form, but not of *a particular* form. So, for instance, in the next example: there I saw *the Masters*, but not any particular Master, not any face or form. Still the recollection was that I *saw* Them. And at the time of the vision I knew that it was They who were there. I know it is hopeless to try to describe this seeing without seeing, together with the simultaneous knowledge of the meaning of what is seen. It sounds like a paradox, and yet when experienced

it is quite simple. The whole question baffles and puzzles me, and only inwardly I understand something of it, but outwardly I cannot describe it satisfactorily. The consciousness can grope further than the brain-instrument is able to record. I add that this class of experiences is to me the most valuable of those I relate. They foreshadow some kind of synthetic, symbolic consciousness which seems altogether nobler and more exalted than that of normal life. I will relate three examples.

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**V.10. The Secrets of the Master's Mind.** One evening, a few years ago, at Adyar, Mr. Leadbeater was answering in one of the meetings a question about how the Master could keep secret from the pupil the mysteries of the higher Initiations even though the pupil's consciousness was partly unified with His. While Mr. Leadbeater was speaking there flashed out before me a vision of a number of lights of varying degrees of brilliancy, from faint and soft luminosity to dazzling and blinding radiance. These globes of light were pupils and Masters, seen from some higher point of view. They did not *represent* these people, but *were* they. The various globes could freely look at each other, communicate with each other and move through each other as long as each one's outlook remained on his own level of brilliancy. But if a lesser light should strain to peer into the contents of any more brilliant globe, such a globe of a higher grade of brilliancy would mechanically blind the sight of the lower individual, and its contents would remain invisible. The content of the higher consciousness was not artificially hidden, but was quite automatically protected against prying from below by virtue of its own nature. The whole picture was living, and produced of course a far richer impression than that given in this very lame description. As in the case of the vision of brotherhood (No. 6) the whole was pregnant with meaning, instinct with intelligence. From one point of view it was a pure conception, from the other a vision; but I should not be able to separate the two nor to declare which was the primary aspect. In writing down this I feel keenly the insufficiency of the description.

[CWL note] (The tenth vision belongs in reality to the same class as the sixth and seventh; it is a partial impression on the physical brain of the ego's method of thought; and when our author remarks that a description of such a thought sounds like a paradox, and yet is in reality quite simple - that inwardly he understands something of it, but outwardly he cannot describe it satisfactorily - he is saying what every one of us who can see is feeling all the time with respect to such impressions. His description of the way in which the higher secrets are preserved from possible prying on the part of those at a lower level (if such prying could at all be thinkable) is luminous in more senses than one. It is a suggestive description of the relations between a Master and His pupil.)

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**V.11. The Chains of Humanity.** Concerning the next vision I do not remember under what circumstances it arose, nor exactly when. I should say only a few years ago, at Adyar. Here the significance was primary, the form secondary, and I am able to analyse it a little more clearly in that I feel that the form represents less the vision as seen, than the vision as translated into ordinary brain-forms. I feel as if behind the vision as I describe it, there was another, the real vision, the mode of seeing which is different from our ordinary mode. I repeat that this seeing behind the seeing I describe is more a beholding of the *principles* of the things than of the things as they *are* here. The feeling of that higher sight remains, but of the sight itself, only its concrete projection, only a materialized deposit.

The picture was that of human beings, not very many, but in some mysterious way so inclusive in their totality as to represent humanity, that is physical humanity, in general. Each individual was as if chained to a kennel as dogs are. There were no chains and no kennels, but nevertheless this is as correct a description as I can make it. Each chain left each individual more or less tether-space. For all that, the tether was relatively small. The significance was that man is strictly chained to a definite locality in space, though thinking himself free. The picture had no reference to free-will and similar abstract problems, but indicated the merely natural facts of the case. The tether had a manifold meaning. Man is practically limited to a spherical plane. He cannot move through space at will. A few miles below the surface of the earth heat and atmospheric pressure make life difficult or impossible; a few miles above that surface the rarefaction of the air and cold do the same. He is restricted, for regular living, to earth, the ocean being unsuitable; he needs fertile land; deserts, marshes, jungles, are forbidden to him. In air he has no support, in water he drowns; through the earth he cannot pass. He cannot move more than a few hours away from his food supply, or he dies of hunger; he must remain near drinking water, or he perishes. He cannot move away from home or family; they claim him back. He cannot depart from the resources of his particular form of civilisation, or he loses his own form of



humanity. The physical as well as social and psychic elements in the chains were all equally discernible, and somehow there was also a suggestion in the illustration of trees waving their branches, but nevertheless firmly rooted in a fixed spot. The vision meant humanity as a whole, and did not specially indicate individuals who cross oceans, travel to the poles or go up in balloons. They were visible in the mass as something like jumping dogs. (Sven Hedin would be a dog who jumped a little bit higher than the others, *voilà tout*; the sailors very lively dogs who were never at rest, and so on. But none of them could outreach the chain.)

It struck me as quite instructive that there may be a point of view from which mankind's freedom of motion is not greater, comparatively, than that of the vegetable kingdom is to us, and with some phantasy one might ask whether, similar to our six-day motor races, green peas have also world championships, for a second and a half or so, in rapid growth, which is about all they could know of motion.

There was no notion of time and, pondering it over at a later date, I thought of a simile of a cluster of bees or ants. The cluster remains in a fixed spot, though individuals may swarm out and return. This is, however, only a very one-sided illustration.

[CWL note] (The somewhat uncomplimentary vision of humanity which is given under the number eleven again represents the ego's view with regard to physical limitations. I think that they could hardly be described more graphically. The picture of the vegetable condition of the great mass of humanity, and of the few travellers as chained dogs jumping about among the vegetables, is distinctly effective!)

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**V.12. In Him We live and move and have Our Being.** The last example I relate in this group is the most impressive and beautiful experience I have had. It came to me many years ago when I was still living in Amsterdam. Towards evening I was walking alone along a road just outside the town. At that place the city ends abruptly, and on the one side stretched vast masses of many-storied houses in unbroken conglomeration, whilst on the other there was the equally unbroken expanse of green meadows losing themselves in the horizon; a peaceful landscape, full of repose, and freshness. The road was a lonely one and, leisurely walking, I must have mused about many things. All of a sudden 'themselves the heavens opened'. I use this biblical phrase because I know no apter one. Suddenly I saw inside and through the mighty expanse of the heavenly vault; and at the same time I realised with the utmost certitude that this whole dome above was nothing but the inside of some gigantic skull. The atmosphere, the space around and above me was not only filled with air and ether, but far more, and above all, with throbbing, living consciousness. And from every point in space, on high and below, in front and behind me, from the right and the left, myriads of invisible threads connected every point in space with every other point in space, serving as invisible wires to report wireless messages from every point to every point simultaneously. I had a sensation of extraordinary wideness, roominess, spaciousness. I *felt* space, as such, better than ever before, and space was conscious. I knew I was inside the consciousness of that measureless skull, as was everything else. And everything was related and correlated with everything else existing in that mighty brain. And though the myriads and millions of connections were beyond counting or enumerating, still this network formed an ordered whole in which the fulness was organic. I felt as if I had touched some single aspect of some world-enveloping consciousness, embracing not only the world as a whole, but every single, even minutest, item in it, in full knowledge of detail as well as totality, and moreover of all internal and mutual relations. My consciousness was swept up for a moment by that bigger insight, and I felt for that moment as if I myself might understand a whole world.

Again I have to repeat that the description is poor and inadequate, for the reality of these things lies in the sensation; the forms of the vision are only the fringes of the experience.

Years later I experienced something much akin to this. This was at Adyar, when, whilst walking through one of its wooded spots, I realised the unity of life, of the living force in this world, more vividly than ever before.

Leaving this class of experiences then with the final warning that my descriptions of them are merely indications rather than real, full, complete descriptions, we will turn to another group.

[CWL note] (The twelfth experience is one of the best of those recorded; yet even that represents but partially the constant experience of one who has opened the higher consciousness. Here, even more than usual, our author insists that his description

is inadequate, and one thoroughly realises that that is so, even while one heartily congratulates him upon it; what human words can describe that which is distinctly super-human - not in the sense that it is out of man's reach, but that it is so far above his ordinary experiences? Still, even from what is written we receive a forcible and vivid impression of the fact that everything around us is pulsating with life and intelligence, and yet that all the intelligence is definitely *one*.)

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## VI. ILLUSTRATIONS

Of this class I quote only a single example. Its chief characteristic is that the vision has a direct illustrative meaning, and no symbolic one. This class also comes in ordinary waking consciousness.

**VI.13. The Size of the Earth.** I do not remember clearly when and where and under what circumstances I saw this vision. I saw before me a sea-surface of immense proportions, the waves surging in mighty curves. One wave in particular drew my attention; it was so huge that it seemed to reach to the utmost heaven, beyond the sun. The primary impression of that ocean was its vastness, its measureless greatness. On the crest of that wave a small globe, our earth, was borne along, a tiny ball tossed about by overwhelming forces. Just as we may say that the moon seems the size of a football, so this little earth seemed about the size of an orange in the shoreless expanse of waters. The other planets, the sun and moon, the stars also, were absent. There was nothing but the illimitable space of sea and the insignificant sphere swept on by it. I realised by this illustration a truer conception of the relation between the dimensions of stellar space and those of our earth than I had done before or have done since. The sense of the vastness of space was for a moment real and living in me. Now I know the greatness theoretically, and I can express it in numbers by speaking of light-years or millions of miles, but then I *felt* it direct and immediately.

As will be seen, there was no symbolic value to the vision; it was only an illustration, and as such it was different from the previous class.

[CWL note] (The thirteenth of the series is correctly labelled as an illustration, but once more it is an illustration at the level of the causal body, and belongs to the type of that to which we have already referred. The impression which it gives is that the writer really saw the earth for an instant from outside - or perhaps saw merely the thought-form of someone else who had so seen it, and had been deeply impressed by it. Such a glimpse of the world from outside is by no means impossible to the ego, but in order to have it he must for the moment free himself from his lower vehicles. I know how impossible such an experience appears to us when imprisoned in the physical consciousness; but the very fact that it seems so impossible is merely an illustration of the limitations so forcibly imaged for us by our author in experience number eleven. The ego also has his limitations, but they are not such as to preclude the vision described. To be able to maintain his consciousness for some time at that level - time sufficient to enable him to make detailed observations - would imply high development and a good deal of special practice; but such a glimpse as is here described comes sometimes at an earlier stage, just in the same way as spasmodic fragments of the lower clairvoyance come often long before astral sight is fully developed.)

## VII. OBJECTIVE THINGS

The next class embraces a group of visions which, until I have further information on the subject, I am inclined to put down as seeings of actually existing, objective things, whether thought-forms or otherwise. This statement must be accepted with caution, of course as I lack the necessary power and knowledge to make such a declaration with authority. They seem to me, to be of the nature indicated, and that is all I can say. An Occultist only would be able to pronounce upon them definitely. I am not implying by the above that, for instance, the symbolical visions were not provoked by realities, but it may be that they were based more on contacts of consciousness visually conceived, whereas the visions now alluded to seem to me more based on seeing apart from contact with unusual currents of consciousness.

**VII.14. The Blue Lotus.** Once, in meditation, I saw the form of a lotus of the softest shade of blue, exquisitely shaped and mounting upwards in a straight line with a steady, regular motion, neither very slow nor very rapid. My eyes were closed, but the form disappeared from my vision when it reached a point a few yards higher than my head. This is strange - as, the eyes being shut, there was no physically limited field of vision I recognised the form at once for that pictured as Fig. 16 in Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater's book on *Thought-Forms*, and described on page 45 of that work. The problem involved is to my mind rather difficult. I was at the time not engaged in the devotional part of meditation, nor thinking about thought-forms or devotion, and the sensation evoked was primarily one of astonishment at seeing the form without any apparent cause. Yet the similarity was so unmistakable and the impression so clear that I cannot admit any possibility of mistake.

[CWL note] (The blue lotus described in number fourteen was without doubt a thought-form just like that which is imaged in the book upon the subject. There is no reason whatever to assume that it was the thought-form of the seer himself - indeed, the probability is that it came from quite another source. It must be borne in mind that a strong and definite thought, such as this must have been, persists for many hours, and is on its own plane perfectly objective. Any one who has for a moment a glimpse of the astral or mental vision, whichever may be required (a detail which depends upon the method of formation of the object) will be able to see this thought-form as it floats by him, just as definitely as we should see with our physical eyes a bird or a balloon which passed us in this lower world. It is possible that, if our observer had made an effort to identify himself with the thought-form which he observed, he would have been able to trace it to its maker; but naturally, this did not occur to him. It is true that the astral field of vision is far more extensive than the physical, and that it is therefore not probable that this form passed suddenly out of it; but it must be remembered that there is for the higher vision what may be described as a field of close attention, and it is quite probable that the thought-form may have drifted into and out of *that*. For one not specially trained in the use of the higher vision, its disappearance from that field of attention would be equivalent to losing sight of it, even though that sight could be instantly recovered by one who was practised in such efforts.

Our students sometimes forget that the habit of the physical plane is strongly impressed upon them, and that to overcome it when in the astral world needs either a determined effort or long experience. Our ordinary life on the physical plane is possible to us only because a certain number of actions have become absolutely instinctive to us; the heart beats, the chest expands and contracts without our volition, and in the same way we have learnt to balance ourselves when walking. This also we do entirely without thinking, yet every little child has to learn the art afresh, just as it has to learn to coordinate the senses of sight and touch, and to reverse in practice the inverted image which is imposed upon the retina. One could imagine a limited form of physical existence which would be possible without some of these instinctive adaptations. A man who was content to remain always recumbent in one place need not learn how to balance himself, nor to reverse by the action of his mind all the objects which are shown to him upside-down by the sense of sight. To most of us such an existence would seem hardly worth the trouble; but there is no doubt that it would be possible.

A great many people live in the astral world with just as imperfect an idea of its possibilities; for they bring into it all the limitations of the physical life to which they are accustomed. Because in this lower world fire will burn and water will drown, because it is unwise here to throw oneself over a precipice, and impossible to force oneself through a wall or a rock, most people fail to realise that in the astral world the conditions are so different that they may plunge unharmed into the depths of the sea or into the crater of Vesuvius, and that the densest physical matter is no obstacle to perfect freedom of movement. It is precisely in order that the physical instinct may be thoroughly overcome that it is necessary to apply what have been called the tests of earth, air, fire and water to those who wish to join the band of Invisible Helpers, so that they may develop what might be called an astral instinct to take the place, while on that plane, of the deeply ingrained physical instinct. Fourth-dimensional sight is within reach of every astral entity, yet most people have no more idea of such a power after death than they had during physical life. So the fact that this devotional thought-form came into our author's field of sight and passed out of it again may perhaps be explained as an instance in which he imported the restriction of his physical field of view into a world where such an idea is in truth unnecessary, because the limitation which causes it does not exist.)

**VII.15. Higher Dimensions.** When residing and touring in the North of England, several years ago, I talked and lectured several times on the fourth dimension. One day after having retired to bed, I lay fully awake, thinking out some problems connected with this subject. I tried to visualise or think out the shape of a fourth-dimensional cube, which I imagined to be the

simplest fourth-dimensional shape. To my great astonishment I saw plainly before me first a fourth-dimensional globe and afterwards a fourth-dimensional cube, and learned only then from this object-lesson that the globe is the simplest body, and not the cube, as the third dimensional analogy ought to have told me beforehand. The remarkable thing was that the definite endeavour to see the one thing made me see the other. I saw the forms as before me in the air (though the room was dark), and behind the forms I saw clearly a rift in the curtains through which a glimmer of light filtered into the room. This was a case in which I can clearly fix the impression that the objects seen were outside my head. In most of the other cases I could not say so definitely, as they partake of a dual character, being almost equally felt as outside and inside the brain.

I forego the attempt to describe the fourth-dimensional cube as to its form. Mathematical description would be possible, but would at the same time disintegrate the real impression in its totality. The fourth-dimensional globe can be better described. It was an ordinary three-dimensional globe, out of which on each side, beginning at its vertical circumference bent tapering horns proceeded, which, with a circular bend, united their points above the globe from which they started. The effect is best indicated by circumscribing the numeral 8 by a circle. So three circles are formed, the lower one representing the initial globe, the upper one representing empty space, and the greater circle circumscribing the whole. If it be now understood that the upper circle does not exist and the lower (small) circle is identical with the outer (large) circle, the impression will have been conveyed, at least to some extent. We may also call the total impression that of a ring. I think it was then that I understood for the first time that so-called fourth-dimensional sight is sight with reference to a space-conception arising from the visual perception of density. I have always been easily able to recall this globe; to recall the cube is far more difficult, and I have to concentrate to get it back.

I have in a like manner had rare visions of fifth and sixth dimensional figures. At least I have felt *as if* the figures I saw were fifth and sixth dimensional. In these matters the greatest caution is necessary. I am aware that I have come into contact with these things as far as the physical brain allows it, without denying that beyond what the brain has caught there was something further, *felt* at the time, which was not handed on. The sixth-dimensional figure I cannot describe. All I remember of it is that it gave me at the time an impression in *form* of what we might call diversity in unity, or synthesis in differentiation. The fifth-dimensional vision is best described, or rather hinted at, by saying that it looked like an Alpine relief map, with the singularity that all mountain peaks and the whole landscape represented in the map were *one* mountain, or again in other words as if all the mountains had one single base. This was the difference between the fifth and the sixth, that in the fifth excrescences were in one sense exteriorised and yet rooted in the same unit; but in the sixth they were differentiated but not exteriorised; they were only *in different ways identical* with the same base, which was their whole.

[CWL note] (Among the many and varied subjects which our Theosophical study brings before us, the fourth dimension is at once one of the most difficult and the most fascinating. I believe that the little drawing which our author has given is the first attempt in modern literature at an actual delineation of a fourth-dimensional solid. The winged globe in Egypt was a symbol, or perhaps rather a mnemonic, of this same idea (though it was also used to typify the sun with his attendant zodiacal light); but outside of the Mysteries it was never drawn so nearly in the real shape as this. Striking as this drawing is, its value lies chiefly in its suggestiveness to those who have once seen that which it represents. One can hardly hope that it will convey a clear idea of the reality to those who have never seen it. It is difficult to get an animal to understand a picture - apparently because he is incapable of grasping the idea that perspective on a flat surface is intended to represent objects which he knows only as solid. The average man is in exactly the same position with regard to any drawing or model which is intended to suggest to him the idea of the fourth dimension; and so, clever and suggestive as this is, I doubt whether it will be of much help to the average reader. The man who has seen the reality might well be helped by this to bring into his ordinary life a flash of that higher consciousness; and in that case he might perhaps be able to supply, in his thought, what must necessarily be lacking in the physical-plane drawing. I am not sure that I agree with our author in regarding the sphere as simpler than the tesseract; but that may be only because all our earlier fourth-dimensional experiments were conducted with the latter. Also I am not sure that one can unreservedly endorse the author's remark that the so-called fourth-dimensional sight is sight with reference to a space-conception arising from the visual perception of density; though I remember a suggestion by Mr. Hinton that the density of a gas may be a measure of its thickness in the fourth dimension.

In the same way we owe our author much thanks for his brave endeavour to give us some suggestion of the appearance of figures belonging to the fifth and sixth dimensions. Once more, we can hardly hope that they will convey much to those who



have not seen; to those who have seen, they are, at the same time, tantalising and most suggestive. They begin to express just a little of what one has seen, but has never been able to describe; and yet they do not go far enough to convey anything definite to the student who has not seen. To say that is no reproach, for it is but to say that the writer is a human being working under human limitations; indeed he shows so singular an aptitude for the subject that one cannot but hope that he will some day turn his attention to it more seriously, and produce a book which may help the rest of us to understand as he evidently understands. It is given to but few to be able to grasp these matters at all, and so among those who can there is a certain brotherhood of comprehension - a brotherhood in which it is already evident that Mr. Van Manen may take a high place if he will.)

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## VIII. PHENOMENA OF THE HALF-AWAKENED STATE

Here we enter an entirely new class of phenomena. All those previously enumerated belonged either to the fully awakened state of consciousness or to the dream state. There is a third state which hovers between the two. It is entered immediately before falling asleep and before fully waking up out of sleep. During part of my life I went to bed in the morning and woke up in the evening. I often stayed in bed for some time half asleep and half awake, partaking equally and vaguely of both sleep and waking consciousness. I observed my sensations with considerable interest, as they offered some curious characteristics.

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**VIII.16. Brain Dramatisations.** The first characteristic seems to me the dramatic form in which consciousness manifests in that state. I was always aware of persons and things, and actions, but I do not remember instances of argument or reasoning or feelings and moods.

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**VIII.17. Bliss - of a Sort.** A second characteristic is that of perfect bliss. This is difficult to describe, if we wish to avoid the little less or the little more. The feeling is one of perfect contentment in the sensation of sheer existence. There is no thought of past or future, only a sort of clinging to the present state of well-being. One feels that one does not want any change; one feels mere life as absolutely self-sufficient. There is a complete absence of any feeling of responsibility, and of any duty or relation to anything outside. In a certain sense one might say that one sinks in these moments to the purely animal state, and I should not be surprised if the consciousness of a well-fed cat basking in the sun offered points of affinity with this state. I suppose here we possibly come in contact with a layer of consciousness in ourselves which we have in common with the animal, and which under ordinary circumstances is obscured by the specifically human element of consciousness. This state I know only as occurring after, and never before, sleep.

[CWL note] (We may take together the sixteenth and seventeenth experiences, because they are in fact only two sides of the same thing - the realisation of purely physical consciousness in a condition of repose and happiness. Many have experienced the blissful feeling between sleep and waking, and it is often accompanied by the knowledge that fuller awakening will put an end to it; so that one is conscious of a desire to prolong it - of a hope that one will not be too soon further awakened. This condition comes only after sleep and never before it, because it expresses the condition of bliss attained by the physical body *through the process of sleep*. Our author is quite right in describing this as animal consciousness, for it is precisely the condition of the animal resting undisturbed. It is the natural joy of life - the joy which habitually attends all life when in repose. It is only we human beings who contrive to make of life a misery; and even we can only do it by getting away from the realities and creating for ourselves wholly artificial conditions. It is quite natural that, in the blissful life of the physical body, feelings and emotions, arguments and reasonings should have no part. The physical body as such is incapable of these, and they are mirrored in its brain only when the man himself once more takes full possession of his vehicle, bringing along with him the mental and astral bodies which are their proper vehicles.)

**VIII.18. A Piece of Mysterious Tapestry.** Several times before falling asleep I saw a quaint picture somewhat resembling a piece of ancient tapestry. I could never see clearly what it was, but recognised it as the same as the one I had previously seen. It was very vivid, and gradually I formed the habit, when it showed itself again, of trying to the utmost to make out what it really was. I have never succeeded in determining its nature or origin, or its relations to anything else. I saw this, of course, only with



the eyes shut, but always when I was on the point of piercing its meaning it would dissolve and nothing would be left. I have also, at various times, seen other ornamental patterns, looking as if in marble or cloth, of a like nature, but never have I found a meaning for them. A friend with whom I discussed this matter suggested that it may have been a purely physiological phenomenon, connected with the nervation of the retina and some stimulation and reaction of these nerves. As to this, I can only record but not explain. This class of visions I only recall as recurring before falling asleep, never after waking.

[CWL note] (The eighteenth experience is not one which has fallen to my lot, but I have heard something like it described by several other persons. It may be purely physiological, as the writer's friend suggested; but I should be inclined to class it rather under the head of that higher physiology which takes cognisance of the astral and mental vehicles. It is true that under certain conditions the eyelids give some such impression as is described; but I think that is only when there is some light in the room. The colours of a man's own aura when seen against a dark background have sometimes very much the appearance of tapestry; and when they are moving slowly, as is often the case when one is just falling asleep, they could be made into pictures as easily as the clouds or the glowing hollows in a fire. Again, every man surrounds himself with a mass of thought-forms, which he is able to see clearly when he uses the consciousness of the mental body or the astral body, according to the type of thought and the level at which the forms were made. But when his consciousness is in a transition state, half on one plane and half on another, it is eminently probable that these also may present the appearance of a confused pattern. As one glides fully into the higher consciousness, these things become comprehensible, but just at that very moment one loses one's connection with the physical brain and consequently there is usually no coherent recollection.)

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**VIII.19. A Sheet of the Vâhan.** Once before falling wholly asleep I saw before me one or two pages of *The Vâhan*, as clear as anything. The front page began with an article by an acquaintance of mine, ran on to the next page and was signed with his name. I noticed exactly at what part of the column his name was, *i.e.*, where the article ended. The impression was clear and definite, but up to date no number of *The Vâhan* has appeared with such an article, though the vision belongs by now to ancient history. What I should like to know is, how does such a definite and detailed delusion arise?

That the above phenomenon is not rare is proven by the following extract from an article on 'Psychic Experiences' by John W. Prentice in *Theosophy in Australasia* for March 1913 (Vol. XVIII, No.12). It furnishes a welcome commentary on my own case and adds material for comparison and judgment.

“On one occasion I was shown a page of *The Theosophist* on which an important statement, bearing on a matter that was greatly worrying me, appeared. This dream served to quieten my mind greatly, and when *The Theosophist* came to hand about three weeks after, with the page exactly as I had seen it, I believed that I had developed a most trustworthy power; but since then many such pages have been shown me, and still wait verification.”

The author extracts from this the very commonsense conclusion: "From all this I learnt two very valuable lessons; first, never to place any value on what may be called the practical side of such experience (we would prefer "never to rely absolutely on the value of," etc.), and in the second place never to discuss them with other people." (We would say: "never to discuss them indiscriminately or broadcast.")

[CWL note] (Vision No. 19 is a specimen of a class by no means uncommon - a clear and definite presentation of something which seems to have no correspondence on the physical plane. Evidently the seer expected that this would prove to be a prognostication of reality; and indeed that was a most natural conclusion, for such forecasts frequently show themselves in precisely that sort of way. Without having actually seen the phenomenon oneself, it is impossible to contradict that hypothesis. It may even yet come true! But it is also possible that what was seen was merely a vivid thought-form. It may be that the friend whose name was seen may have had it in mind to write such an article, and may have thought of it as occupying about that much of space. Or again, it may have been that the editor of the paper desired such an article, or that some third or fourth person thought that it ought to be written by that friend. There are quite a number of possibilities, but without actually seeing the form it is scarcely possible to pronounce upon it with any safety. Precisely this is frequently an embarrassment in attempting to explain psychic experiences - not that there is any difficulty in accounting for them, but that it is scarcely possible, with the amount of information given, to make the right selection among half a dozen ways in which the effect might have been

produced.

Our author in his concluding words upon this experience seems to favour an explanation which is, I suppose, not impossible, but is nevertheless perhaps the least likely of all solutions - the idea that the whole thing is simply a delusion, which I take to imply that it was an objectless prank of the imagination. It is difficult to suppose this, for in such a sense as that there are very few delusions. Some one must have thought of such an article, and must have thought of it with a certain amount of precision; and it is eminently improbable that he could have done so with the set purpose of deceiving our author, for what could he possibly gain by so foolish an action? It is true that certain classes of nature-spirits occasionally play apparently aimless pranks; but after a little experience of them, one learns to identify their handiwork without much difficulty, and this particular joke is by no means in their style.)

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**VIII.20. On the Verge.** Another characteristic of this half-between state is that the majority of its pictures are themselves of an ambiguous nature. Very often indeed I was aware of crowds of people moving about, of figures showing themselves, of actions going on, together with the sensation that what happened was not clearly intelligible and that persons and things were not clearly visible. They were, so to say, just on the verge of definite perception, but remained always at an infinitesimal distance beyond the boundary of full recognition. I felt all the time that one last effort would make the whole thing clear, but precisely this effort would either wake me fully up or disperse the picture. My position was that of some dream-Tantalus. The exact meaning, the exact vision, would ever elude my grasp, but there remained always the endeavour to make one more final effort, always without result.

In conclusion, I think that, on the whole, there is a difference between the half-awake consciousness before falling asleep and that after emerging from sleep.

[CWL note] (The twentieth paragraph gives us another prominent characteristic of the visions and impressions which come to a man just as he is falling asleep. He has the idea that a great deal is going on - that much motion is taking place - but the exact meaning of it all eludes him; and when he is on the brink of understanding, he either loses consciousness or finds that the visions slip away from him. But 'these are precisely the only terminations which in the course of nature can come to that half-awake condition. The man's consciousness is half in his physical vehicle and half in the astral, and consequently everything belonging to the latter world is only half seen and realised. The escape from that intermediate condition must be either forwards or backwards; either the man falls backwards into the waking state, and then the half-grasped astral appearances vanish, or he must pass forwards into full astral consciousness, in which case he severs his connection with the physical brain and loses all memory of what happens. I mean, of course, not that the man himself loses the memory at the time, for he passes straight on into the fuller consciousness; but when he returns to the physical brain in the morning, he finds that just at that point his memory stops. There is a third way out - the development of continuous consciousness; but that means a great deal of patient experiment and much hard work.)

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## **IX. False Dreams**

One of the most instructive dreams I ever had was a false one. It was so vivid, was followed by such detailed and profuse physical-plane corroborations, involved such seemingly strong occult authority, that the lesson I received when I learnt that the whole affair was untrustworthy became very precious to me; and struck a note of caution which I shall always remember in dealing with psychic or superphysical matters.

For obvious reasons I cannot here indicate names; this would be bad taste and indiscreet, as too intimate feelings are connected with the story. I shall therefore indicate my personages by the letters of the alphabet.

**IX.21. A Salutory Object Lesson.** X was a person enjoying the highest respect in a circle of friends, named A, B, C, etc., all of whom regarded X more as a guru, teacher, guide, and a highly evolved Occultist than as an equal. I myself had also a very

high regard for X, but had come to the conclusion that I must base my estimate of him on all such good and noble qualities as I myself recognised and saw manifested in him, and not on any claim on his behalf of occult greatness or hidden attainments. X died, and fairly soon after his death I had a particularly vivid dream in which Mrs. Besant visited me - she was unmistakably and most livingly represented - and chided me for having undervalued X during his lifetime. She added: "If you had only known how great he was, and who he has been, you would have honoured him more." My answer was to the effect that I was sorry if I had underestimated him, but that I was not able to do better than to recognise greatness to the extent that I realised it myself, and that it was not possible to appreciate qualities which I only knew by reputation and not by experience. And I asked who then X had been. Mrs. Besant answered that X had been Julius Caesar and Marcus Aurelius.

Next day I told this dream to A, who congratulated me on having had it and told me it was true. When I told the dream to B, he told me that already twenty years ago the same message had come to him through spiritualistic channels. Some time later C told me that she had heard a voice adding another incarnation (I withhold details of this for certain reasons) and D told me that Master K. H. Himself had come to him one day at noon (in meditation, I think) and had also given the two identifications which I received from Mrs. Besant in my dream. Now, previously, in my waking consciousness, I knew nothing of the existence of these identifications; only later I became aware that the circle of friends (A, B, C, etc.) had an elaborate list of identifications of various incarnations of X.

Mrs. Besant, whom I met for the first time two years after the experience, denied that she had visited and given me the above information, and Mr. Leadbeater traversed the correctness of the identifications. Nevertheless there remained the fact that in my dream I was told two names which were known in this connection to some other people; and further that some of these names had been communicated to some of these people at various periods, by various means, and in one case seemingly by one of the Masters.

My own guess at what really happened is as follows A had his information from his own power to look up incarnations. He was 'occultly' closest to X, and his chief disciple, as it were. He may have regretted that I was not sufficiently strong in the faith, and may have thought: "He does not believe me; perhaps he will believe when A. B. tells him. I wish that A. B. *would* tell him." Falling asleep with this strong wish, he may have assumed Mrs. Besant's form on the astral plane and spoken to me himself, with the result as related above. This is only a surmise and goes no further than this. At all events, seeing the clearness and vividness of the impression, the outside physical plane corroboration, and the *mise-en-scène* of Master K. H., this experience has been a formidable warning to me, which I am indeed thankful to have received.

[CWL note] (In the case of the twenty-first experience, the explanation given by the author himself is distinctly the most probable. It may be said that, if this be true, no one may safely trust to any astral impression, as it is always possible that there may be a case of personation. That is true; personation is undoubtedly much easier in the astral world than in the physical, and only a trained Occultist is thoroughly armed against it. This is a fact which all students of the occult have to face, and it is for this reason that emphatic warnings have been constantly given against placing undue reliance upon information conveyed in this manner. We shall all remember the advice given so decidedly by Aryasangha in *The Voice of the Silence*: "Look not for thy Guru in those mayavic regions." It is of course perfectly possible that any member may meet our President at night in the astral world, and obtain from her valuable information or teaching; but it is also true that the average member has no guarantee that it is really the President whom he has seen, or that, even if it were she, he has brought through the message correctly. It is part of the training of the Occultist to learn how to detect impostures. The only absolutely certain way of doing this is to trace the ego behind the figure which is seen and to be able to do this naturally requires the unfolding of the faculties of the causal body. Short of that, one may develop an instinct with regard to a particular person which is usually reliable - usually, but not invariably; but for most members it is emphatically advisable to write and obtain confirmation on the physical plane when the matter is of any importance.

I may mention that I myself well knew and greatly liked the character named X; but he had not the slightest resemblance either to Julius Caesar or Marcus Aurelius.

Students should endeavour to realise that the mere possession of astral sight no more enables them to judge accurately on astral matters than the physical sight of a newly-born baby gives him an accurate impression of physical distance. Much

undeserved discredit has been cast upon occult study by the blind belief of its neophytes in the accuracy of everything which they happen to see and to hear in their earlier astral experiences.)

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## X. MUSICAL FORMS

Of visual impressions akin to Mr. Leadbeater's descriptions and pictures in the book on *Thought-Forms*, I have experienced none. Music sometimes *suggests* forms to me, but without accompanying vision. There is a phrase in the *Kreuzer Sonata*, for instance, which suggests a waterfall or a big wave breaking with a deep boom. Such suggested forms, however, I do not intend to describe. They seem to belong to the simpler and more exterior forms of mechanical association.

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**X.22. A Cathedral and Angels.** In Amsterdam I once heard Bach's *Missa Solemnis* executed by Mengelberg's famous band. At a given stage I saw the walls of a magnificent Gothic cathedral slowly arise. The lines and disposition of these walls were in harmony with the strains of the music, and as the music proceeded so did the walls rise up. At last they were completed up to the roof. At this point a new *motif* or a new movement commenced, and the picture followed suit; the roof remained absent, but instead of further construction angels came from above, descended and flew upwards again. There was a system of graceful response and counter-response between these angelic visitors, bringing messages from on high and answering from below. It was a sort of chorus and anti-chorus. All this again was in complete harmony with the music. Then again the music changed and the vision disappeared. What puzzles me specially in this vision is the appearance of orthodox angels, *parfaitement en règle*. I don't believe in them in the Christian sense and form, and had no reason to think on ecclesiastical lines. I knew that the composition was a Mass; but I was merely following and enjoying the music as music.

In speaking about this matter with a friend recently, she told me that she had once had a similar experience. Hearing some music she suddenly saw a gigantic face, and though she hears very much music she had never had another such vision.

These two experiences here related, are, I think, different in nature from what I call the suggestions arising from listening to music. With these one can trace the link, with the former that is not the case. So I have always associated a certain composition by Chopin with Morocco, most likely because whilst hearing the piece played for the first time, I was reading Hall Caine's *Scapegoat*, and because the melancholic and exotic nature of the music fitted in on that occasion with the mood produced by the book.

[CWL note] (The special picture seen in the twenty-second experience may well have been of this nature. Our author wonders that he should have seen angels in the curious and anatomically incorrect form usually adopted by Christian painters; but he is perhaps overlooking the fact that what he saw was not his own thought-form, but probably that of the composer. There is still another possibility - that it may have been the thought-form of some devout auditor, who had heard the composition frequently, and associated it with such a vision as is described; but it is on the whole more probable that we owe so large and so well ordered a form to the marvellous genius of the great musician.

The gigantic face seen by a friend is a phenomenon that we can hardly pretend to diagnose without a good deal more information than is given to us. If the music was devotional in character, it may perhaps have been someone's idea of a Divine Face. Or again it may have been a real apparition of one of the great musical angels, or possibly a personification of some of the great powers of nature.)

## XI. NATURAL BEAUTY

One experience in connection with the beauty of natural scenery stands isolated. It is remarkable enough to relate, however.

**XI.23. In the Vosges.** Some five years ago I made a motor trip in the Vosges with my friends Mr. A. Ostermann, Professor O. Penzig, and Mr. Leadbeater. We left Colmar, in Alsace, went to Gérardmer, in France, and returned to Colmar, crossing

the beautiful pass named the Schlucht. We went home towards evening, and when we neared the Schlucht the sun was setting. Alsace with its quaint old towns and villages, itself a broad, flat and verdant valley in which the Rhine winds its silvery stream, flanked on both sides by the Vosges and the Black Forest, both equally beautiful - Alsace is altogether a delightful country. On this occasion the beauty of the Vosges struck me again greatly, and whilst the motor-car was spinning ahead I tried to drink in all the beauty of hillside and valley, of clouds and sun, of pine-forests and rocks. Suddenly a sharp curve of the road changed the position of the car and a new view lay spread out before our sight. At that very moment, a sensation of utter ecstasy, of utter beauty, struck me, so to say, full in the chest; a sensation of such overwhelming happiness and at the same time such strangely deep and endless sadness, that I had to take a firm grip of myself not to cry out. As a matter of fact I felt tears well up in my eyes, and the slightest provocation would have made me weep. The emotion was purely an artistic one, and that accounts for the happiness, but I am ignorant why sadness should have been mingled with it.

This emotion, provoked by either artistic or other causes, I have never before or since felt in any like measure. I am not an emotional man in these matters and I have seen, in three parts of the world, enough beautiful scenery to make me look in vain for an adequate reason for this particular experience. Furthermore I had motored some thousands of miles in and around Alsace without ever experiencing such a feeling. Therefore I simply note it down and add it to my record.

[CWL note] (The twenty-third experience comes evidently from a definitely exterior source. As our author points out, he has seen many beautiful landscapes in various countries, yet they have never produced upon him at all the same kind of impression. Indeed, I believe he had passed over that very spot at other times without unusual agitation. Clearly, therefore, the emotion was not his own, but was impressed upon him from outside. The most probable explanation is that someone of acute perception and intense artistic feeling had recently been admiring the view from that particular spot - had perhaps even been painting it; and that our author happened just at that moment to be sufficiently in sympathy with the mental attitude of that artist to absorb and to reproduce fully all that he felt. Another possibility is that for the moment our author came into union with the angel or great nature-spirit ensouling that particular part of the country. This hypothesis, however, is less likely than the other, since he describes a strong feeling of sadness as part of his experience - an emotion which is little likely to have been part of what may be called the sensations of Nature itself. Either of these temporary unifications of consciousness with another entity is possible to any sensitive person; but he must have within himself the sympathy to understand and the power to respond.)

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## **XII. LECTURING EXPERIENCES**

I once had an interesting experience whilst lecturing at Rotterdam.

**XII.24. A Sea of Light and Lightness.** One winter evening I lectured in a fairly big hall in Rotterdam. There was a biting frost, and I came away with a formidable cold. In the midst of the lecture, quite of a sudden, I felt the atmosphere change. A sense of lightness and buoyancy came over me which changed my feelings altogether. At the same time I was aware that I was surrounded by a brilliant (non-physical) light of rich golden colour. The change of atmosphere was so complete and total that it seemed as if the air before had been of mud and slush in comparison with the rarity, refinedness and purity of that which I was now breathing. Simultaneously I was conscious that, instead of being as it were wholly immersed in my subject, I was listening to myself with a corner of my consciousness. It seemed as if my voice had changed also. There was a curious metallic ring in it which was new to me and which pleased me very much. This lasted for some phrases, I think some minutes, five or ten at the utmost, if so much as that, and then the old conditions set in again. The contrast between the feeling of the atmosphere during and before the experience made a very vivid impression on me. (The twenty-fourth experience implies not so much a change of atmosphere as a change of consciousness in the lecturer. It is evident that he at least partially left his body, so that he was able to watch himself from without. The part of himself which was temporarily freed from physical limitation was able to see the mental conditions surrounding him; and the rich golden colour which seems to have been so prominent a feature is exactly what might have been expected as an expression of the mental activity which was being put forth by the lecturer. The description of the difference between that and the physical atmosphere is most graphic; it constitutes precisely one of the little touches which manifest so clearly the author's accuracy, and appeal so strongly to those who have passed through a similar experience. It seems evident that he must have carried with him in his externalisation a certain amount of his etheric double, since he was still



able to hear his own physical voice, although with an alteration which suggests the inclusion of higher notes than those perceptible to physical ears, and probably also a compensating exclusion of some of the latter.

This being a subjective experience, dependent upon a partial projection of the speaker's consciousness, there is no reason why any member of the audience should have noticed it.)

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**XII.25. Other Phenomena connected with Lecturing which are not of my own experiencing.** I have several times been told by friends in my audiences that they have seen luminous halos around my head or even figures behind me. In some cases a stately Hindu wearing a turban has been described. I mention this in order to make the catalogue complete, but as the information comes from others I am not responsible for it. I myself have never seen such forms, and the above Rotterdam experience is the only case in which I have experienced a 'light' phenomenon myself. It is amusing that in that case no one of my audience told me he had seen anything of the kind.

[CWL note] (In the cases described in paragraph 25, there is no change of consciousness in the speaker, but a temporary accession of sensitiveness in certain members of his audience. The halo seen round the head of a lecturer has often been described. It is one of the easiest non-physical phenomena to see. The mental activity of the lecturer projects this strong yellow light, all of it focussed in the upper part of the aura and therefore surrounding the physical head, so that it readily becomes visible to vision even slightly raised above the normal, especially if it happens to be projected against a dark background. The presence of an Oriental stranger on the platform is also by no means unusual, and it would be rash to assume, as our students so often do, that the visitor is necessarily a great Adept. Even after years of reading on the subject, it seems to be difficult for our students to grasp the utter naturalness of the astral life, and to understand that those who have left their physical bodies (either temporarily or permanently) may be just as much interested in a lecture as if they still retained the coarser vehicle. Astral visitors may attend any lecture anywhere, and they constantly do so; but probably the percentage of such visitors is higher at Theosophical lectures than at others, because those who study our subjects are a little more likely than others to know something of their capabilities along these lines. Naturally our subjects have a special interest for Orientals, and Indian members of our Society, whether living or dead, are likely to watch with comparatively keen interest the endeavours to spread their ideas in western lands. It often occurs also that they good-naturedly endeavour to assist the lecturer by suggesting to him additional ideas or illustrations; and if any member of the audience happens for the moment to develop sufficient sensitiveness to catch sight of such a visitor, a legend immediately grows up like that which our author describes.)

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### **XIII. APPARITION AT A DISTANCE**

The following two incidents concern me, but they are not within my own personal knowledge. Still I think they ought to be mentioned for completeness' sake. They relate to my appearance, without my knowledge, to others - these others being in the waking state. I have two examples.

**XIII.26. Advice at a Distance.** Some years ago a young man, fairly psychic and, I think, also very weak-willed, came several times to me for advice and to talk Theosophy. He was at that time in all sorts of difficulties, financial, domestic and otherwise. He was a black-and-white artist. One day meeting me, he said: "I thank you very much for the advice you gave me yesterday." As I was not aware of having seen him on the day before, I asked him what he meant. He told me that he had stood in one of the streets, leaning against a wall in a state of despondency, and that I had appeared to him and had spoken some cheering words of advice. I had no reason whatever to doubt his good faith. The important point is that I must have been up and doing at the time he mentioned. If I had been asleep the explanation might have been easier.

**XIII.27. A Visit aboard a Steamer.** The second case of my being told that I appeared was aboard a steamer from Hull to Holland. A friend of mine, travelling on that ship, related to me that she had seen me (I think at about 7 A. M.) and she described my costume completely, a description which tallied with the clothes I was then habitually wearing. I do not know

whether I was asleep at the moment of the apparition; I also am ignorant if I, or rather my simulacrum, said anything. I, at the time, was in England.

[CWL note] (The appearances described in paragraphs 26 and 27 are examples of a very interesting class about which our information is as yet defective. In the second case it seems probable that the author, was asleep, and so we have merely an ordinary astral visit; but in the former of the two cases he distinctly says that he was awake and going about his work in one place, though at the very same time he appeared in another and gave some useful advice. Several possible explanations of this phenomenon may be offered. It may be a case in which some invisible helper, seeing a poor man sadly in need of counsel and comfort, resolved to give it to him, but took for this purpose the form of a friend who was well known to him, in order to make the advice more natural and acceptable. Another possibility is that our author as an ego was watching with interest a person whom he had already tried to help, and - seeing him urgently in need of further assistance at a time when his own physical body was otherwise employed - materialised a thought-form of himself through which he could convey the ideas which he wished to give. Either of these hypotheses would satisfactorily explain the appearance described by our author; but there are other cases on record in which neither of these suggestions seems appropriate. The double of the late Mr. W. T. Stead, for example, can hardly be supposed to come under either of these heads. It seems rather to be a case of an intensely strong thought-form made of him by another person, and then occupied and energised - whether by his own ego or by someone else we have not sufficient evidence to show. In rare circumstances personation on the physical plane by a materialised astral entity becomes possible. There is, however, no reason to suspect anything of that sort in the case described, for we have no evidence to show that anyone but the young man to whom our author spoke was conscious of his presence at that time and place, so that the phenomenon may have been simply subjective.)

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#### XIV. KARMIC PROBLEMS

I remember twice, at least, in my life having been in serious danger, from which I escaped unhurt. There is no need to invoke hidden intervention to explain the safe endings, but to make sure not to pass by even faint indications I note them down here.

**XIV.28. Trick Cycling.** When I was a boy of some twelve years I happened to read in a paper a story of how a cyclist rode down the steps of the Washington Capitol. I may about the same time have seen some trick cycling in a circus. I was then living at Haarlem, not far from the sea-side resort Zandvoort. With a friend of my own age I went one day to Zandvoort, where there is a big flight of stairs, divided into three series of steps, leading from the station below to the Gallery on the top of the dunes. When returning to the station we came to the steps, and the sight of them was too big a temptation. I said I would cycle down them. My friend, who was wiser, protested, but I was obstinate. He ran down the first flight. I started on my adventurous ride, but immediately lost control over the machine and came down crashing, banging and bumping, rapidly gathering speed. Fortunately my friend caught hold of the cycle and I fell down without hurt, the machine being only slightly damaged. There is no doubt that he saved my life. But now I ask myself: "An incident of such importance for me, and my present incarnation, can it stand utterly unrelated to my personal karma?" How easily my friend might have missed the grip, how easily might he have become afraid or have lost his head! Was there something lying at the back of his action which made it fatally necessary that he *should* be there to be a karmic agent? Of course, I do not forget God Chance, nor the purely rationalistic explanation; but are they enough? This incident is therefore not so much an occult experience as an experience giving rise to an occult problem! What is the nature of the determining factor which in a crisis leads to a solution in one definite direction with far-reaching and incalculable results, where any other solution would have led to equally far-reaching results of an entirely different character? This seems to me a very difficult problem indeed, only answerable with certainty by Occultists.

**XIV.29. In the Gorges d'Héric.** A similar but less obvious case occurred to me a few years ago in the south of France. Mr. Leadbeater and I were staying in the beautiful district of the southern Cevennes, in the department of Hérault. We used to take long walks, and one day we went to the Gorges d'Héric, descending through them into the plains. We lost our way, and darkness overtook us before we had passed out of the Gorge. We had no guide, no lamp, and no knowledge of the country. At a given moment I, leading the party, crossed - in the dark - the stream over a series of boulders, and so we transferred

ourselves from the right to the left bank of the stream near the bottom of the Gorge. At that spot we found a path, and, gropingly following that, reached a point where we saw spots of light. Some shouting brought peasants with lanterns, and eventually we came home safe and sound. Now the peasants told us that had we followed the Gorge for only a quite small distance, we should have come to a sudden drop of some thirty metres, a well-known danger-spot in those parts, where quite frequently some one or more unfortunate tourists, in the same plight as ourselves, meet their end by falling over the edge. Now what I want to know is: what made me cross the stream at that particular spot in the pitch dark? I do not know it in the least. I could not see a track, and on the other side, though there was a path, we had to feel our way along it. May it be that I 'picked up the trail' as a dog does, or was it a case of inspiration?

As said before I record these two cases more as involving problems than as being occult experiences in the true sense of the word, for (faithful to H. P. B.'s injunction) we should be attentive to the smallest details.

[CWL note] (Experiences 28 and 29 are not, strictly speaking occult at all, but we may certainly take them to represent items in the working out of the destiny of the persons concerned. It clearly was not intended by the Powers directing his evolution that our author should perish at the age of twelve in a cycle accident. And since that was not intended, it became necessary to circumvent him in his little effort at self-destruction. The easiest way to do this was through the hands of his companion, who seems to have arrested him precisely at the only point of his descent where such interference would have been possible. I do not know that we are bound to infer anything more than courage and promptitude on the part of that friend; but if more be necessary, the presence of some invisible helper to steady the friend's hand, and show him exactly what to do and when to do it, would surely be sufficient to account for what happened. And in this case, when I speak of an invisible helper, I do not at all necessarily mean to imply a member of the band of Theosophical students who devote themselves especially to such work. Any dead person of promptitude and resource who happened to be on the spot may have shown the boy-friend how to do what was necessary, and strengthened him in the action. The very fact that he ran ahead to the only place where he could check the headlong descent seems to show that a certain amount of prevision was exercised - most likely not by the boy. Another possibility is that the author's ego awoke to the danger of the situation. He was unable to control his juvenile personality, which had apparently taken the bit between its teeth, and was in a condition of excited determination. The ego may have found it easier to control for a moment the other boy (who was apparently not excited) than his own lower manifestation; and we have the yet further possibility that the ego of the friend saw here an opportunity of a good piece of work. Or indeed he may have undertaken it at the urgent request of the other's ego; for this is something which one sees not infrequently in ordinary life. A personality may for some reason take up obstinately some line of action of which the ego behind does not at all approve; and when that happens it is sometimes actually easier for that ego to induce a friend or friends to remonstrate and advise, than to act directly upon the fragment of himself which by its stubbornness has shut itself away for the moment from higher influences.

We should say Theosophically that "it was not in his karma" that our author should come to an untimely end in that particular ways and therefore, since he insisted on making so wild an experiment, he put somebody to the trouble of interfering with its natural result. I know that many similar cases are allowed to pass without interference, and consequently end fatally. In them we are bound to assume that there is something in the stored-up karma of the person concerned which can discharge itself in that particular way, and consequently there is no interference with his free-will. Evidently our author was needed for other work later, and consequently in his case the interference took place. Readers may think that this is very much like the old Christian idea of a Providence which watched over every moment of our lives. It is precisely the reality which lay behind that idea - the difference being that we do not recognise any principle of arbitrary selection, but hold that such interference can take place only under the working of natural law.

In case 29 we have no proof as to whether the guiding force was that of the ego or some friend, or whether it may have been, as our author himself suggests, the action of some sort of survival of animal instinct. From what we were afterwards told by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, it would appear there had been cases in which no such interference took place. Once more, we can only say that he was not destined to die at that time and in that particular way.)

## **XV. UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCES**

Most of the visions related up to now are of a pleasant and elevating nature. I have also experienced some unpleasant sights which should not be omitted from this catalogue.

**XV.30. An Unwelcome Visitor.** One evening when just about to step into my bed, in Amsterdam, I saw a sort of elemental creature of a most objectionable kind sitting on my pillow. It consisted of a soft round body from which, at what may be called the waist, some ten long necks extended, each one something like the neck of a swan. These necks wriggled and twisted and wound through each other as snakes do. The evil eyes in the heads leered and sneered in a wicked way. The colour of the thing was green, that particular slimy and filthy green associated with old stones which have lain in a gutter for a long time, or with the stomach of some frogs. The creature gave an impression of softness and decay, like a jelly-fish or cuttle-fish. Besides, it spread a horrible and filthy stench. Its height was something over a foot. It happened that I was absolutely tired out on that evening, and that I had but one thought, that of rest. I felt that the creature could not *do* anything to me, and I was in no mood to wait or to try some elaborate magic. So I jumped into my bed and laid my head on the pillow, thinking at the time There is no room for both of us here; either you go, or I." And at the moment I lay down the creature burst up, as it were, and disappeared. I have never seen it or its brothers since. At the time I wondered much if a creature like this may have had any connection with the origin of the story of Medusa's head.

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**XV.31. Undesirable Cattle.** On a few other occasions I have seen creatures, seemingly of the same class. I remember in particular a herd of cattle-like beings, somehow a cross between calves and elephants. They had the trunks of elephants (only the ends resembled the snouts of pigs), and something of the build and size of calves. They were white in colour, with a suggestion of leprosy in the whiteness, and these bodies gave the impression of corruption. All over the bodies were festering circular sores, like red flowers on a white field, altogether nauseating. I am reminded in thinking of them of Mr. Leadbeater's description of the hosts of elementals which he saw tramp past him when he had his experience on the Adyar river island (*The Perfume of Egypt*, 'A Test of Courage'). In this case also the malignant gleam in the eyes of the creatures was the chief characteristic. The beasts spelled evil.

[CWL note] (The unpleasant entities described in paragraphs 30 and 31 are specimens of low and undesirable forms which prey almost exclusively on the emanations, produced by a particular type of emotion. Their appearance must, I fear, indicate the presence somewhere in the neighbourhood of a person in the habit of yielding himself to unrestrained sensuality. At least, that is almost certainly the origin of the peculiarly objectionable creature described in 30, and the form of the story suggests that it had been intentionally sent by someone. Those mentioned in 31 may have been of the same nature, but may also have been attracted by abnormal manifestations of aggravated envy and jealousy. The author may be congratulated on his courage in so entirely ignoring the horrible beast which he describes. Assuredly most of us would have spent some time and trouble in driving it away or dissipating it, instead of calmly lying down to sleep, secure in the conviction it could do no harm.)

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## **XVI. SUNDRIES**

With the above cases I have practically exhausted my personal experience of things psychic or occult. It only remains to gather together and enumerate a few items which fall within the scope of this article without being readily susceptible of special illustration.

**XVI.32. Thought-Action on Dreamers.** There are two cases known to me in which I, awake, exercised thought-influence on different other persons who were then asleep. The interesting point to me was to hear the reports of their dreams, and to note the dream symbolism, which had completely transformed the formal side of the transaction, but had kept it absolutely intact from a symbolical point of view.

The two cases were slightly dissimilar in nature. In the first, I was in a highly excited and turbulent state of mind of an undesirable nature. A very good and intimate friend of mine slept in the room next to me. He was asleep when I was still lying

awake. Next morning he told me that he had had a vivid dream about me being in a burning house, and that he had rushed up to help me and to extricate or rescue me from the danger. I recognised at once the 'fire of passion' in the burning house, and could not but feel grateful for my friend's astral loyalty.

In the second case I was deliberately thinking of another person with regard to a certain course of action. Next day that friend told me that he had dreamt that I had come to him, and my appearance and conduct as he described it tallied *mutatis mutandis* with my thoughts of the previous night. Only I, knowing the details, knew also what his description meant; whereas he, not having any data to go on, could not see further than his mere recollection, symbolising but not explaining the affair.

[CWL note] (In the first case mentioned in paragraph 32, the author's astral body was in a turbulent condition - which means not only brilliant colour and energetic vibration, but also great temporary expansion and vehement pulsations extending over a considerable area. The friend sleeping in the next room could not but be within the sphere of influence of these alarums and excursions, and when his attention was attracted by them, his innate spirit of helpfulness immediately asserted itself, and he pluckily rushed in to try to readjust matters.

In the second case, the writer gives us scarcely sufficient detail to enable us usefully to comment upon it further than to remark that during sleep people are specially susceptible to thought-influence, and that each ego has usually his own system of symbolism into which he would be likely to translate whatever was impressed upon him.)

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**XVI.33. Dream Interpretation.** I have noticed that I am very often able when a dream is told to me, to give on the spur of the moment and quite spontaneously an interpretation of it to the dreamer, with which he is satisfied. Again, this is merely a note in passing, which is given only for what it is worth. I have never studied dream-books, or dream interpretation, and am not specially interested in the subject, except so far as it forms a branch of general psychology.

[CWL note] (In 33 we see the manifestation of a useful and valuable faculty - evidence of an ego which is quick to read the symbolism of other egos, and has the power of impressing the results of his knowledge upon his own physical brain.)

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**XVI.34. Running water.** I notice, has always a strange fascination for me. Whether it be a waterfall, rapids in a river, a swiftly rushing stream, waves by the sea, merely rain or even water running from a tap, the motion and sound always please me. I like sitting near a stream or staring at the sea. The sound nearly always suggests voices to me, in a language I do not understand, but *might* understand if I just could get a little bit more *inside* it.

An American author describes something similar in a recent story. An invalid is lying in a hospital, wearily awaiting convalescence:

"She listened. Rushing down the valley in the large grounds, there was a stream - a liquid, unending, deep chord of many broken notes! .... The sweet hollow silver of the booming water divided, changed into voices that called, talked, laughed. There were long, low sentences; there were single questioning words; there were murmuring names spoken, and tender half-sounds, all unhurried, all contented and sure and adequate. She did not catch definite words, only intonations, the rise and fall; but the steady strength of the voices seemed to lift her weakness and bear it out on a calm flood. The stream was her friend; the voices of the stream were unreal voices, yet peace-giving."

I thought that this feeling might have something to do with the water elementals, but recently whilst motoring in a particularly noiseless motor-car I experienced the same feeling in hearing the smooth swish of its revolving machinery.

[CWL note] (As to paragraph 34, I incline to our author's suggestion that it does indicate that he is in special sympathy with the element of water - with what have sometimes been called water-elementals, or perhaps rather nature-spirits; and I would suggest that the sound of machinery which he describes as having produced upon him a similar effect, produced that effect precisely because it *was* similar, and so gave subconsciously a suggestion of the sound of water. Such a sound consists of a set of vibrations which evidently exercise a special soothing influence upon the writer, and obviously similar vibrations would



produce a similar result even independently of the mental suggestion conveyed by them.)

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**XVI.35. An Anecdote.** To finish this lengthy article I relate an insignificant little anecdote about a dream I had the other night. It is amusing.

I dreamed I was in London, where I moved through parts I know well in my waking consciousness. Suddenly and without any transition I was in Paris, which I know equally well, physically, continuing my wanderings which I had begun in England. The curious thing is that the action was unbroken and did not change, whereas the scene was cut clean in two halves. It was like a conversation begun in English and continued in French without change of subject, listener or speaker. And herewith my catalogue is complete. Johan van Manen.

[CWL note] (The concluding anecdote gives us a characteristic example of the instantaneous changes which are possible, when one functions in the mental body. It might happen equally well in the astral, but not quite without at least a momentary sense of transition. The strong probability is, therefore, that our author was at the moment of this experience using the mental vehicle; but that also implies that he may not really have been either in London or Paris at all. He may simply have been moving among his own mental reproductions of parts of these two cities.

It is one of the peculiarities of this set of stories that the hero of them appears to be more at home in the mental world than the emotional - that so many of his glimpses of higher consciousness show him to be using the causal or mental vehicle rather than that astral body in which most of us have to be content to begin our superphysical voyagings. But students who may be disposed to look enviously upon such capacity may console themselves by the thought that each line of development has its special perils, and that ready use of the mental body brings with it a dangerous facility in criticism which, if indulged to excess, may hold a man back from those still higher realms which are the kingdom of the humble and the especial inheritance of those that be pure in heart.

As a concluding note I can only repeat what I have suggested in the beginning, that the man who has had this singularly complete series of experiences ought to have had more - and even yet should have many more - since they clearly show a degree and type of sensitiveness which is very well worth cultivating, with a view to practical results. We must all thank our author for having thus so fully and so carefully unbosomed himself. He may assuredly take unto himself such reward as is involved in the knowledge that what he has written will be useful to many, and will help them to understand and to coordinate similar happenings in their own lives. Few students have such a wealth of varied experiences; fewer still have the faculty of stating them so clearly and so impersonally; so we may end, as we began, with thanks and congratulations, and (let me add) with high hopes for the future of the author. C. W. Leadbeater